Pearson Edexcel
Level 3 Extended Project
Unit 1 Dissertation

Specification

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About Pearson

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About this document

This guidance document contains all of the information relevant to one of four optional unit approaches available to candidates who are completing an extended project qualification with Pearson Edexcel. The annexe documents at the end of the document are those that are specific to the unit approach, for which candidates and centres are required to submit. Our main qualification [specification document](#) provides information relevant to the overarching qualification structure and administration, assessment, tutor guidance, malpractice, and any additional information.

Unit 1: Dissertation

Level 3

Guided learning hours: 120

Introduction

The dissertation provides learners with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of a selected topic.

Unit 1: Dissertation differs from *Unit 2: Investigation/Field Study* in the way in which information is collected. In *Unit 1: Dissertation*, there is no requirement to use specific research instruments (for example measurements, experiments, observations, surveys, interviews, questionnaires) to collect data, and there is likely to be greater focus on secondary sources.

The unit requires the learner to plan, research, analyse information and then evaluate and review the project. The findings and recommendations will then be presented by the learner to a selected audience.

The unit requires learners to take an active role in managing the project and provides opportunities to develop skills in decision making, problem solving and communicating. It also introduces learners to the techniques and methods of research.

It is estimated that the dissertation produced will be 5000–6000 words in length. Learners will not be penalised for producing work outside the suggested word count, but they should ensure their word count allows them to meet the assessment objectives.

The assessment evidence presented by the learner must evidence all the above learning outcomes.

Unit summary and Learning Outcomes

Learning outcome number	Learning outcome	Assessment
	The learner will:	**The learner can:**
1	Be able to identify, plan and manage a dissertation project	• identify the main objectives for the project • provide an appropriate plan • use organisational skills and strategies appropriately.
2	Be able to undertake research, collect evidence and select information using appropriate methodology	• select relevant information from appropriate sources • obtain information • relate resources to the research question or hypothesis.
3	Be able to interpret evidence, draw conclusions and write up results into a finished dissertation	• produce a dissertation using appropriate style and structure • interpret evidence gathered • discuss different perspectives • draw conclusions.
4	Be able to present findings, conclusions and an evaluation to an audience.	• review and evaluate the project and own learning • present the project outcomes in an organised manner, engaging with audience and responding to questions.

Unit content

1 Be able to identify, plan and manage a dissertation project

Identifying and planning the project

Learners should select a topic from an area which interests them. They should conduct a literature review to help them narrow down the topic to a working title, which is likely to be in the form of a question or problem. Before they begin, learners should be clear about what they plan to investigate and how they will do it.

As part of their proposal, learners must complete the Project Proposal Form (*Annexe B*). This must be signed off by the tutor-assessor before any further work can be carried out (see *page 15*). The title/topic must be considered suitable by the tutor-assessor, be capable of investigation and suitable in size and scale to be completed in the time available.

Completed project proposal forms should include objectives and a rationale for their choice of topic/title. They should also identify the proposed activities that they will need to undertake, for example:

- background reading
- conducting research
- analysing information and drawing conclusions
- writing up the project, checking and re-drafting
- evaluating the project and own learning
- preparing for the presentation.

Plans should also include the resources that they will require and an attempt to prepare for contingencies.

The tutor-assessor and project proposal checker must sign off the project proposal form before the learner can do any more work (see *page 15*). By confirming that the project is appropriate, the centre is confirming that the proposal will give the learners scope to achieve all of the assessment objectives.

Managing the project

During the course of the project, learners must keep individual records which document its progress, the activities undertaken and the decision-making process, using an 'activity log'. An example activity log can be found in *Annexe C* and electronic copies can be downloaded from the Pearson website.

Learners should monitor their own progress, adapting their plan and adjusting their timelines where necessary; where this occurs, this should be recorded in the activity log.

Summary of evidence required from learner[1]

- The project proposal form.
- The activity log.

2 **Be able to undertake research, collect evidence and select information using appropriate methodology**

Learners should:

- research, analyse and interpret information from sources
- extract, interpret and summarise information
- show connections between ideas, information, sources etc
- present the research in a coherent, well-organised manner
- be independently motivated and seek out their own research material
- make use of the distinction between fact, speculation and subjective opinion when evaluating reliability of sources.

Unit 1: Dissertation and *Unit 2: Investigation/Field Study* have a different focus in this learning outcome. In *Unit 2: Investigation/Field Study*, learners will use particular research instruments (for example measurements, experiments, observations, surveys, interviews, questionnaires) to collect data. In *Unit 1: Dissertation*, the use of these types of research instruments is not required, and there is likely to be greater focus on secondary sources.

Learners should also use skills gained from the taught element of the course to comment on the reliability and validity of sources, distinguishing between primary and secondary sources, as well as between facts, speculation and subjective opinion. For example, learners should note whether the source of information comes from a newspaper summary of original research (and may therefore be abridged or even misrepresented). They should also be sensitive to the fact that particular sources will offer biased views.

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[1] If clearly referenced, credit can be given for additional evidence of planning and managing the project contained in any supplementary materials submitted for assessment

Learners should make use of a consistent system of referencing. References should make clear which author is being quoted, and where the quotation comes from. There should also be a bibliography which uses an appropriate and consistent format.

Summary of evidence required from learner

- Research carried out. This is likely to be contained within relevant sections of the dissertation (see *learning outcome 3*).

3   Be able to interpret evidence, draw conclusions and write up results into a finished dissertation

The dissertation needs to be organised. There are different ways of structuring a dissertation, which will vary depending on the nature of the question and the type of research carried out. One possible structure is:

- Introduction
- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3
- Conclusion
- References and bibliography.

The different sections should all follow each other in a logical manner.

The introduction will include an explanation of the question or problem and a rationale for the choice of this question, for example why it is important or interesting to the learner.

The sections can be organised in different ways, but the dissertation should describe previously published studies that are relevant to the question. Learners should acknowledge alternative interpretations or arguments and assess them critically, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, and defending their own arguments against possible objections.

The dissertation should also include a conclusion, summarising what has been found in relation to the original question or problem. There should also be recommendations, such as wider implications, suggestions for further work, etc.

Learners should be encouraged to plan and draft their work before producing the finished dissertation.

Care should be taken with the presentation of the dissertation, with appropriate use made of headings, paragraphing, page numbering, labelling of diagrams, and font sizes and styles. Learners should also take care to use language accurately and appropriately, for example spelling, grammar, punctuation, technical language, and an appropriately neutral or formal style.

For more information about the referencing and bibliography, see *learning outcome 2*.

Summary of evidence required from learner

- The dissertation.

4 Be able to present findings, conclusions and an evaluation to an audience

The evaluation

Learners must produce an evaluation of the project. Some or all of it could be included within the dissertation itself, or it could be a separate piece of work.

The evaluation should aim to address:

- the extent to which the learner achieved what they set out to achieve

- possible weaknesses in, and limitations of, their methodology and interpretations

- how well they performed at different stages of the project

- what they would do differently next time and why

- what they have learned about conducting research and writing a dissertation, and how useful this has been to them

The presentation

The findings should be presented to an audience. The presentation should summarise what the dissertation is about, what was done, the findings and conclusions that can be drawn from it. It must be appropriate to the selected audience in terms of length, language used, room selected and conditions, and also in terms of any handouts and ICT used.

The presentation must demonstrate the use of appropriate communication skills and the learner should be able to respond to questioning from the audience in a capable manner.

Further information about the presentation is given in the EPQ specification and can be found on the Edexcel website.

Summary of evidence required from learner

- The evaluation. This may be a written evaluation or some or all of it could be covered within the presentation.

- The presentation and any supporting material. For oral presentations, the evidence must include an observation record completed by the tutor assessor, along with any notes, handouts, etc prepared by the learner; the presentation does **not** need to be recorded on audio/video.

Marking grid for Unit 1: Dissertation

Dissertation: AO1 — Manage

Mark band 1	Mark band 2	Mark band 3
The research question is identified and is developed with **a lot of** guidance, support and assistance from the tutor-assessor. The question **may lack focus.**	The research question is identified and is developed with **some** guidance, support and assistance from the tutor-assessor **and is then finalised and refined by the learner**. The question is **reasonably focussed.**	The research question is identified and is developed with **limited** guidance, support and assistance from the tutor-assessor but is then finalised **and refined independently by the learner**. The question is **well defined** and **clearly focussed.**
The project plan gives **objectives** for the project and **a brief and general** rationale. **Most of the main** tasks to be completed are listed.	The project plan gives **clear objectives** for the project and a **clear** rationale. **All of the main** tasks to be completed are provided in an appropriate order **and described with an appropriate time span allocated for some tasks**	The project plan is **clear and concise**, with **clear and thoughtful objectives and rationale. All of the main** tasks to be completed are provided in an appropriate order **and described in detail with an appropriate time span allocated for each task.**
The learner shows **limited** organisational ability and time management skills when managing the project. The learner maintains **cursory** records of activities undertaken during the project. **There is some monitoring of own progress.**	The learner shows **reasonable** organisational ability and time management skills when managing the project. The learner maintains **clear** records of activities undertaken during the project, **including problems encountered and steps taken to overcome them. Progress is monitored against the original plan**.	The learner shows **a high level of** organisational ability and time management skills when managing the project. The learner maintains **clear and detailed** records of activities undertaken during the project, **including problems encountered and steps taken to overcome them. Progress is monitored against the original plan and adjustments made to the plan where necessary**.
0–3 marks	**4–6 marks**	**7–9 marks**

See *pages 9-11* for guidance on how to use the marking grids.

Dissertation: AO2 — Use resources

Mark band 1	Mark band 2	Mark band 3
Some sources have been used and **investigated**. **There is some referencing** of research sources and a bibliography is included, listing **most of the sources**.	**A range of different types of** sources have been used and **investigated**. Research sources are **referenced appropriately** and a bibliography is included, listing **the sources in an appropriate format.**	**A wide range of different types** of sources have been used and **thoroughly investigated.** Research sources are **referenced appropriately and consistently** and a bibliography is included, listing **the sources in an appropriate and consistent format.**
Information and resources have been **selected** and **some of this is directly relevant to the research question.** The information has been **collated** in reference to the research question posed. **There are attempts to establish** links and connections between the **information** used, **but some of these may be tenuous.**	Information and resources **relevant to the research question** have been **selected.** The information has been **analysed** in reference to the research question posed. The **learner has established clear** links and connections between the **information** used.	Information and resources **relevant to the research question** have been **carefully selected**. The information has been **analysed and synthesised** in reference to the research question posed. **Clear, concise and detailed links** have been established between the **information** used.
Some understanding of the **less complex areas of the research topic** has been shown. **The learner makes some attempt** to evaluate the reliability of sources, **but this is not always effective.**	**A reasonable understanding** of the **complexities of the research area in general, and the research question in particular,** has been shown. **The learner is generally effective in** evaluating the reliability of sources.	A **thorough understanding** of the **complexities of the research question has been shown. Learners have placed the research question into the wider context of the research area. The learner makes use of the distinction between fact, speculation and subjective opinion in** evaluating the reliability of sources **and does this consistently effectively.**
0–4 marks	**5–8 marks**	**9–12 marks**

See *pages 9-11* for guidance on how to use the marking grids.

Dissertation: AO3 — Develop and realise

Mark band 1	Mark band 2	Mark band 3
An attempt has been made to structure the dissertation, **using sections.**	The dissertation is **structured** in **sections** and there is **some evidence of the ability to link them together coherently.**	The dissertation is **well structured**, with **appropriate sections** that are **linked together coherently throughout.**
Information is **generally presented** in a logical order, although **some of it may not be wholly relevant**. **Some use** is made of techniques that aid clarity, eg numbering, headings, paragraphing, labelling. Language errors (eg grammar, syntax, vocabulary) **may sometimes be** intrusive but they **generally do not** interfere with communication. **Some technical terms** are **used**.	Information is **presented** in a logical order and **is generally clear and relevant. Generally effective use** is made of techniques that aid clarity, eg numbering, headings, paragraphing, labelling. **There are few** language errors (eg grammar, syntax, vocabulary), and they are **generally not** intrusive and **do not** interfere with communication. **Technical terms** are **generally used appropriately**.	Information is **presented** in a logical order and it is **consistently clear and relevant. Effective and consistent** use is made of techniques that aid clarity, eg numbering, headings, paragraphing, labelling. **There are few** language errors (eg grammar, syntax, vocabulary) and they are **not** intrusive and **do not** interfere with communication. **Technical terms** are used **consistently and effectively.**
The content shows **some understanding** of the topic and an **attempt to answer** the research question.	The content shows **good understanding** of the topic area and **an argument that answers** the research question. **Some counter arguments or alternative interpretations** are **considered** in the discussion.	The content shows **a thorough and perceptive understanding** of the topic area and **a clearly argued and well-thought out argument that answers** the research question and **is supported by several lines of reasoning. Counter arguments or alternative interpretations** are **considered carefully and systematically** in the discussion.

Dissertation: AO3 — Develop and realise (cont.)

Mark band 1	Mark band 2	Mark band 3
There is a **brief conclusion** that **summarises** the point of view and the case that has been made.	There is a **clear conclusion** that **summarises** the point of view and the case that has been made. **There are some suggestions for further work.**	There is a **clear and well-developed conclusion** that **proficiently summarises** the point of view and the case that has been made. **There are well-thought out suggestions for further work and an awareness of any wider implications.**
0–8 marks	**9–16 marks**	**17–24 marks**

See *pages 9-11* for guidance on how to use the marking grids.

Dissertation: AO4 — Review

Mark band 1	Mark band 2	Mark band 3
Overall the learner shows **some self-awareness** when evaluating the project and the extent to which they have achieved their aims. The learner **attempts to identify** the limitations of their project's methodology and interpretations but this **may not correspond with** the **tutor-assessor's** own judgement. The learner **identifies** some **basic** ideas for what they could do differently next time. They have drawn **basic** conclusions about the process of researching and writing a dissertation that could help them in future.	Overall the learner shows **good insight and self-awareness** in evaluating the project and the extent to which they have achieved their aims. The learner **is generally successful at identifying and explaining** limitations of their project's methodology and interpretations. The learner **describes** ideas for what they could do differently next time. They have drawn **clear** conclusions about the process of researching and writing a dissertation that could help them in future.	Overall the learner shows a **high level of insight and self-awareness** in evaluating the project and the extent to which they have achieved their aims. The learner **is highly adept at identifying and analysing in detail** limitations of their project's methodology and interpretations. The learner **explains and justifies** ideas for what they could do differently next time. They have drawn **clear and perceptive** conclusions about the process of researching and writing a dissertation that could help them in future.
The presentation is **structured** so that the **audience can see that there has been some attempt to organise it logically** and the learner shows **basic** ability to convey the main ideas.	The presentation is **structured** so that it is **reasonably clear to the audience how it is organised and how the different parts link together** and the learner shows **good** ability to convey the main idea.	The presentation is **clearly and logically** structured so that it is **completely clear to the audience how the different parts link together** and the learner shows a **high level** of ability to convey the main ideas**.**

Dissertation: AO4 — Review (cont.)

Mark band 1	Mark band 2	Mark band 3
If an oral presentation is given, it is **generally audible**, although it is likely that the learner **relies heavily** on supporting materials, eg notes or cue cards. The learner shows **limited ability to engage the audience** or hold their attention. Where visual aids are used, these **attempt to support** the presentation, **although they may not be clearly visible** to the audience and **may contain too much information.**	If an oral presentation is given, it is **audible and reasonably paced**. Although it is likely that the learner **relies** on supporting materials, eg notes or cue cards, **there are parts of the presentation that are not simply read aloud**. The learner **engages** with the audience and holds their attention **in places.** Where visual aids are used, these **are relevant** and **are reasonably effective at supporting** the presentation. They show **reasonable clarity and design.**	If an oral presentation is given, it is **clearly audible** and **well paced**. The **learner may make some use of** supporting materials, eg notes of cue cards, **but the presentation is not simply read aloud.** The learner **engages well** with the audience and holds their attention. Where visual aids are used, these **are relevant** and are **consistently effective at supporting** the presentation. They are **clearly visible** to the audience, **are well designed and do not contain too much information.**
Some questions are answered and the learner shows **reasonable** subject knowledge.	**Questions** are answered **reasonably clearly and effectively** and the learner shows **reasonable** subject knowledge.	The learner handles questions **calmly and confidently**. Questions are answered **clearly and insightfully** and the learner shows **good** subject knowledge.
0–3 marks	**4–6 marks**	**7–9 marks**

See *pages 9-11* for guidance on using the marking grids.

Total marks out of 54.

Annexe B: Project Proposal Form

Level 3 Project Proposal Form for *Unit 1: Dissertation*. This form is for reference only. Please refer to the website to download a copy of this form.

Learner name	**Learner registration number**

Centre name	**Centre number**

Tutor-assessor name	**Unit**
	Unit 1: Dissertation

Proposed title of project

Date

Section One: Title, objectives, responsibilities
Title or working title of project (in the form of a question)
Project objectives (eg, what is the question you want to answer? What do you want to learn how to do? What do you want find out?)
If it is a group project, what will your role or responsibilities be?

Section Two: Reasons for choosing this project

Reasons for choosing the project (eg links to other subjects you are studying, personal interest, future plans, knowledge/skills you want to improve, why the topic is important):

Level 3 [Project Proposal Form](#) for *Unit 1: Dissertation*. This form is for reference only. Please refer to the website to download a copy of this form**.**

Section Three: Activities and timescales	
Activities to be carried out during the project (eg, research, analysis, writing, preparing for the presentation, etc)	**How long this will take**
Milestone one: **Target date (set by tutor-assessor):** **Milestone two:** **Target date (set by tutor-assessor):**	

Section Four: Resources
What resources will you need for your research, write up and presentation (eg libraries, books, journals, equipment)   **What you areas of research will you cover?**

Level 3 Project Proposal Form *for Unit 1: Dissertation*. This form is for reference only. Please refer to the website to download a copy of this form.

Comments and agreement from tutor-assessor
Comments (optional):   **I confirm that the project is appropriate.** **Agreed:**   **(name)**   **(date)**
Comments and agreement from proposal checker
Comments (optional):   **I confirm that the project is appropriate.** **Agreed:**   **(name)**   **(date)**

Annexe C: Activity Log

This [Activity Log](#) is for reference only. Please refer to the website to download a copy of this form.

Learner name: **Learner registration number:**

Centre name: **Centre number:**

Teacher-assessor name:

Use this to record the progress of your project. You may want to discuss:

- What you have done (eg from one week to the next)
- (if you are working in a group), what discussions you have had
- Any changes that you have (or will need) to make to your plans
- What resources you have found/hope to find
- What problems you are encountering and how you are solving them
- What you are going to do next

Date	Comments

Annexe D: Candidate Record Sheet

The [Candidate Record Sheet](#) must be completed for every candidate to confirm that the work is their own, and has been authenticated by the teacher. This is also the document where you mark the candidate's work.

The form is available to download from the Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project Coursework materials web page.

A form should be completed for each candidate and submitted with the work for moderation.

Candidate Record Sheet – Level 3 Extended Project

Learner Name_____ **Learner number**_____

Centre Name _____ **Centre Number**_____

Unit Name _____ **Unit Number**_____

Project checklist

The final Project should include the following items:

- a Project Proposal Form
- a Project activity log or diary
- records of research carried out (which could be included within the project outcome or given separately)
- the Project Outcome*
- an evaluation
- evidence of the presentation

Project Contents
Please list the format of the items submitted as part of the Project, note whether this evidence is shared with other candidates and if so who (A4 Report, portfolio, sketchbook, audio file of sound track, video file of play/film, etc)

Authentication confirmation/consent	
Candidate: I hereby certify to the best of my knowledge that this work: • has been produced without any assistance beyond that recorded and allowed by the scheme of assessment and have clearly referenced any sources and any AI tools used in the work. • is not work which has been or will be submitted for another qualification. I acknowledge that Pearson may use candidate work for the purposes of standardisation, training, and exemplar material.	Signature:
Teacher: I confirm that the learner's work was conducted under the conditions laid out by the specification. I have authenticated the learner's work and am satisfied that to the best of my knowledge the work produced is: • solely that of the learner and the learner has clearly referenced any sources and any artificial intelligence (AI) tools used in the work. • is not work that has been or will be submitted for another qualification.	Signature: Print Name in *block capitals please*:

Teacher – Assessor marks and supporting comments

Comments related to the assessment criteria which support the mark awarded for each Assessment Objective should be entered on the grid below.

Assessment Objective	Teacher-Assessor comments	Teacher-Assessor Mark	Moderator Mark
AO1 Manage (*9 marks*) Comment:			
AO2 Use Resources (*12 marks*) Comment:			
AO3 Develop and Realise (*24 marks*) Comment:			

Assessment Objective	Teacher-Assessor comments	Teacher-Assessor Mark	Moderator Mark
AO4 Review (*9 marks*) Comment:			
AO4 Review (*9 marks*) Comment:			
		Total Mark	**/54**	**/54**